THE IMPACT OF COMMUNISM ON THE DRAVIDIAN MOVEMENT 1950 - 60

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Introduction

India was marching towards progress and development during the 1950-60 period with political, economic and social reformation marked with elections, five-year plans (1951-56-and 1956-61) and the Constitutional amendments. When India became a Republic on January 26th 1950, incidentally, Ambedkar resigned as Law Minister in 1950, Which he served from 29 August 29th 1947 to January 24th 1950. The Communists, hitherto, waging armed struggle during 1948-1951 (in and around Tanjore in Tamil Nadu), gave up violence and joined the democratic polity by changing their slogan "People's Democracy" to "National Democracy". However, the Dravidian parties had struck to their separatism with the sloganeering "Dravidanadu or sudukadu" (Dravidastan or crematory grounds)[1]. Though, Nehru was highly critical about the Communists, he had to be close with Russia in his "socialistic" approach. When Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971)[2] and Nikolai Alexandrovich Bulganin (1895-1975)[3] visited India in 1955, they were received well, but the official details were not disclosed[4]. Though communism, socialism, and collectivism are preached and propagated but practiced selectively, even by the politicians with the conflict of ideologies in Tamil Nadu. The effect, interaction and encounters of Communists with that of Dravidian ideologists, protagonists and propagandists have been studied during 1930-40 (Part-I[5] and Part-II[6]) and 1940-507 earlier, and now the Impact of Communism on Dravidian Movement during the period 1950-60 is analyzed in this paper.

Banning and removing ban on the Communist Party (1949-50)

As pointed out, the Communists were inciting violence in Tanjore against the landlords. In 1950 the District of Tanjore and especially the area of the Sub-Divisional Magistracy of Pattukottai was the seat of continuous trouble between the landlords and the Kisans under the guise of "Kisan movement", fully exploited by the Communists by way of fomenting agitations against the Government and for promoting forces of disorder and violence. The net result was that the Government took stringent measures to restrain the activities of these Communists[8]. On September 27, 1949, the Madras Government banned the Communist party, 19 labour organizations and their branches, and arrested 152 communists. On November 16, 1950, the ban was lifted, as the Madras High Court held that the ban "void and ultra vires" under the Constitution. Actually, they were involved in violence creating riot-like situation in many areas. Such activities were collectively called as "adventurism" by other comrades[9]. Thus, critics mention it "B. T. Ranadive's adventurism"! Unwittingly, it was claimed that the armed struggle and guerrilla warfare launched by the CPI having failed, the party decided for a new tactical line in the special convention held at Calcutta from October 11th to 16th 1951. Ironically, their own admission[10], "We attacked railway stations, we throw bombs on trains and buses, we tried to break up Nehru's meeting....., we set fire to Congress offices....These acts, as well as the use of acid bulbs in meetings and demonstrations, were part of the old leadership's revolutionary line." What they had done in Madras Presidency was recorded in the Madras Government documents[11].

Salem Jail riots and Periyar's support for the Communists (February 1950)

In February 11, 1950, there was a serious rioting by the Communist prisoners in the annexe at Central Jail, Salem, when they, without any provocation on the part of the jail officials, murderously assaulted the Jailer and a few others and tried to scale over the walls[12]. Therefore, firing ordered to quell a riot taken place, resulted in the killing of 22 Communists injuring 107 others, who were arrested, prosecuted and jailed there for attacking police station in 1948. The riot took place for a week among the 450 inmates serving sentences for different charges. As usual, political parties decried the incident and Periyar also

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condemned it, but, an enquiry commission set up by the British Government justified the firing saying it was resorted to for quelling "riots." Besides writing editorial[13], Periyar tried to organize a procession, but, he was refused *permission, instead, he was asked to* submit a memorandum with the signatures obtained from the public to condemn the Salem prison incidence[14].

Communists shunning violence and going for elections (1951-52)

Tanjore and Salem incidents exposed the Communist "adventurism" and thus, they decided to pose for peace. During the Calcutta convention from October 11th to 16th 1951, C. Rajeswara Rao was replaced by Ajoy Ghosh and the Communists stopped their violent activities and kept silence. The Tamil Nadu comrades had been also diplomatic in submitting to the new head following the peaceful transition. However, their affiliation with China and Russia, and about the freedom of India, the Communists differed much among themselves. Such ideological controversies continued at the Fourth Congress held at Phalghat in April 1956, though, some truce was made at the Fifth Congress held at Amritsar in 1958. Kumarsamy Raja, CM of Madras convened a meeting on September 7, 1951 to release the Communists with conditions, so that they could participate in the first general elections. The Communists contested 52 assembly seats and 5 Lok Sabha seats with the support of Dravidar Kazhagam. The first general elections were held between 25 October 1951 and 27 March 1952 and the Communist Party emerged as the second largest single group within the legislature reducing the strength of the Congress to an uneasy working majority.

The position of Communists and Dravidian parties about the Modified Educational Policy in 1952-54

Rajaji became CM for third time on April 10, 1952 and improved the administration effectively. Though, the buffer stock of food grains maintained, prices kept under control, the Thamizharasu Kazhagam, DK, DMK and the Communists continued to protest on different issues. In 1953, there was flood, followed by drought also affecting the people of Tamil Nadu. Under such circumstances, when Rajaji attempted to introduce new educational policy, Periyar and the Communists opposed it. Actually, the school working hours were reduced, as there was no sufficient funds and teachers to manage the children. As the children advised to follow the job / trade of the father, it was interpreted as introduction "kulattozhil" [vocation of the caste / hereditary job or trade]. When the bill was introduced in the assembly, actually, it was passed by just one vote difference. At that time, the leader of opposition, P. Ramamurti was attacked for his absence and alleged that as a Brahman, he colluded with the Brahman CM by the Dravidian parties. Though, the new education policy was introduced w.e.f. July 29th 1953, it was abandoned on May 18th 1954.

Periyar Ambedkar and Communists

Periyar was having friendship and alliance with the Communists at different periods with love-hate relationship. But, Ambedkar had been highly critical of the Communists[15]. "The Communist Party was originally in the hands of some Brahmin boys - Dange and others. They have been trying to win over the Maratha community and the Scheduled Castes. But they have made no headway in Maharashtra. Why? Because they are mostly a bunch of Brahmin boys. The Russians made a great mistake to entrust the Communist movement in India to them. Either the Russians didn't want Communism in India - they wanted only drummer boys - or they didn't understand." He also categorically asserted[16] that, his party would not in any case align with the Communist Party "for the plain reason that I do not believe in Communism." However, Periyar had aligned with the Communists. In 1953, the Communist Party differed with Periyar about the right of secession of the states from the Indian Union, though, generally, they had such principle enunciated by Lenin. They also denied about the exclusiveness of the Tamil language and the separate racial identity of "Dravidians". Periyar sarcastically opined about the DK-Communist relationship, in his own way[17], "Passengers travelling in compartment become friends, their friendship lasts until they reach their destinations. Each passenger gets down at his particular way station and goes his own way. That is the friendship between the Communist Party and the Dravida Kazhagam". He justified that the alliance with the Communists was that of "enemy's enemy is friend" i.e, as the Communists were enemies of Congress, they become friends. When EVR parted with the Communists, there were many reasons attributed

but, the main treachery was that they tried to convert Dravida Kazhagam branches into Communist party units. He blamed them that they were having offices in foreign places like Bombay or Delhi interested in exploiting our country, as they were controlled by their foreign bosses[18].

Communist Jeevanandam and atheist Periyar - ideological clash resulted in break

In 1935, there was misunderstanding between P. Jeevanandam (1907-1963) and EVR about the relationship with the Justice Party, as the former accused later of diluting the "self-respect" movement by joining with the Justice Party. Thus, Jeevanandam opposed the demand of "dravidastan". He also wrote about the "Unity of Tamilnadu" that all Tamils could be identified by their Tamilian birthright irrespective of their caste. Instead of supporting "Tamilnadu", he was accused of denying the right of the Tamils. He considered C. P. Ramaswami Iyer and Rajagopalachari as Tamils, in the same way, one could argue that Nehru was a Kashmiri and Prakasam an Andhra, though all were "Aryans". Thus, a Dravidian apologist[19] criticized Jeevanandam falling prey to "the trick of the Brahmanas" and went on to accuse that Jeeva was serving the cause of Hindi and Marwari imperialism[20]. As Jeevanandam refused, the DMK also refused to support the Communists. Thus, the close Communist friend of Periyar Jeevanandam became "Dravidian enemy". While Periyar was burning Ramayana and Anna was criticizing "Kamba Ramayanam", he approached Puranas in literary aspect, thus, when they were burnt, Jeevanandam opposed it and he gave new interpretation to Kamba Ramayana. The Swadeshi type of communism attracted many, like Dravidian movement. During 1950-60, the communists started shedding their radicalism, whereas, the Dravidanadu protagonists increasing their separatist pitch. While the former had been agnostics, but not atheists, the latter already been vouchsafed for their rabid atheism, particularly, anti-Hindu stance in their propaganda and demonstration.

Perivar and Ramamurti - love-hate relationship

Periyar always criticized P. Ramamurti like anything[21], when he contested from Tanjore in 1952. Incidentally, in the same year, when Ramamurti got married, he presided over, as it was an inter-caste marriage and that too, a ritual-free wedding referred to as a 'self-respect' (suyamariyadai) marriage. As the Communist wanted to contest elections, they also changed their stand about India as Union of States with a right to self-determination with a right to secede. On February 11, 1952, Ramamurti referred to "the right to secede from the union on the basis of language, culture and contiguity of territory," in the presence of Periyar[22]. When it attracted nation-wide publicity, he had to retract. Under the circumstances, Jeevanandam approached DMK for support, the DMK leaders demanded the support for the "dravidastan" in writing, as they were campaigning with high rhetoric pitch of *"If at all, we get, we would get only Dravidanadu (Dravidastan), otherwise, sudukadu (crematory ground)"*. In fact, they declared that they oppose the Indian Constitution enacted without considering the aspirations of Dravidians in an autocratic way and therefore, they would not contest elections also. Jayakanthan recorded the misunderstanding between the two ideological groups, in his characteristic way[23], *"Among the Communists the view was held that the DMK men were clowns, opportunists and loudmouths. They were agents of Tamil or southern capitalists, secret friends of the Anglo-American imperialist, subversive and destructive infiltrators into working class politics, and representatives of the lumpen proletariat. Any favourable appraisal of the DMK was simply non-existent among Communists"*.

"Dravidastan" compelled Andhra to break away from Madras State, then, followed by Kerala and Karnataka (1952-1956)

The rhetoric "Dravidanadu or Sudukadu", definitely roused the regionalism and incited people to get linguistic fanaticism. As the Dravidian protagonists and Tamil separatists had been stressing for separate nation including the areas of Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra, the respective language speaking people started responding accordingly. Potti Sriramulu started agitation with his fast unto death and died on December 15th 1952. This made Nehru to announce the formation of the Andhra State on December 19th 1952 and it was formed on November 1st, 1953. The linguistic formation of States took place in 1956 with the formation of Kerala and Karnaka. Thus, the "Dravidastan" was reduced to "Tamilnadu". Whether, the linguistic demand of state formation

had been due to the influence of the Communism or otherwise is not known, as the Communists themselves renounced such idea and joined the mainstream contesting elections and ruling Kerala and west Bengal during 1967-69.

Even in 1957 elections DK and DMK were at loggerheads

The DMK resolved to contest elections consequent to the decision taken at the 1956 conference held at Trichy, though it was not recognized by the Election Commission[24]. From 24 February to 14 March, 1957, the second by-elections were held. It had to change its Dravidian facade to socialist, as it was involved in the anti-constitutional activities and also necessitated to compete with Congress, hitherto branded as Brahman party. DMK relegated DK considerably and Periyar supported Kamraj before the elections in October, 1956 and during the DK executive meeting, it was announced[25]: *"Since Mr. Kamaraj has done his best to serve the Tamilians, since he has changed Acharyar's educational system designed to perpetuate the caste system, since he has conferred many jobs and many benefits on Tamilians in the educational and other spheres and since the Brahman and DMK people are trying to oust him from power, it has become the duty of all Tamilians to support Mr. Kamaraj and his followers in the election."* When the DK decided to support Kamraj, the Congress had split with Rajaji forming Congress Reform Committee (CRC). DMK could win only two seats and the winners were M. Karunanidhi and Anbazhagan. When Kamaraj became CM on April 14. 1954 and Periyar supported him as "rule of a True Tamilian"! The Communists were reduced to 4 from 17 seats they held.

The Communist "Right of Self-determination of Nations with a right to secede" haunting and daunting Dravidian protagonists

The 1957 elections exposed the political dichotomy of Dravidian ideology in dealing with national issues. The change in paradigm shift noticed in the politics of the Communists made them to think carefully. Thus, they continued to play both policies as exhibited in their speeches, writings and actions. Dravidologists proceeded with the separatist discourses, as could be noted from Murasoli Maran. The "dravidastan" demand was maintained in Maran's series in Murasoli. Later in 1957, it was brought out in the form of a book, "Why the happy Dravidastan is needed?" (En vendum Inbat Travidam)[26]. The note of C. N. Annadurai and foreword by Nedunchezhiyan to the book prove their separatist stand. The language used had been so caustic, sarcastic, and blasphemous and so on. How these Dravidian ideologists had been imbibed with Lenin's propagation of "Right of Self- determination of Nations with a right to secede" and the formative western principles of "nation-state" hypotheses and theories could be noted. Without seriously concerning about the consequences and implications, they tried to whip up the passion of Tamil speaking people, thus, distancing other language speaking people and making them enemies, oppressors, suppressors and aggressors. In contrast, M. P. Sivaganam writings presented similar views, but, without any separatist ideology[27].

Communism, Dravidian ideology and anti-Brahmanism

During the material period, the political ideologists had been in a dilemma in attacking and supporting Brahmans, who were directly and indirectly influencing and connected with them. While the Simpson group Brahmans was supporting DMK, the TVS group Congress and Communists themselves. Here, as the DK was' isolated, they had been vehemently against the Brahmans. The DMK, of course, tactfully encouraged the DK to carry out the campaign, as they helped them in other way. How they had beaten the Communists with the same stick is too well-known to be repeated here. Though, both the Communists and the Dravidian ideologists used to give sermon about egalitarianism and utopian society, they promoted casteism only with the domination of Mudaliars, Chettiyars, Pillais, Reddys, Naidus and other business, trade and industrialists . Of course, cinema field also helped them a lot for their promotion of ideology, though, the dominant producers, directors and actors had been Brahmans.

Congress turning to "Socialism", Communists becoming second position in polities, but, Dravidians sticking to "Dravidanadu (1950-60)

The linguistic formation of states in 1953 or the political reduction through the decreasing boundaries of "Dravidastan" proved the infirmity

and futility of their ideology. Congress in the Avadi Session 1955 declared that they wanted to build up a socialistic pattern of society in India. With the Five year plans, economic development and progress were targeted by the national politicians and industrialists. On the other hand, the DK and DMK were indulged in erasing of Hindi letters on the boards (01-08-1950), breaking Pilliaiyar idols (27-05-2016), erasing Hindi letters in the railway stations, (01-08-1953), opposition to Rajaji's education policy (01-08-1955), burning the pictures of Rama (01-08-1956), erasing "Brahmanal" word on the boards of hotels (05-05-1957 / 30-12-1957), burning Constitution - burning pieces of paper with these articles written on them (26-11-1957) and so on. Incidentally, all these were carried on the "Aryan-Dravidian race hypotheses and theories". Periyar was perhaps changing his stand with M. P. Sivagnanam, when he expressed about the decentralization of powers without any separatist demand in his letter dated 26-01-1956 to him[28]. When the DMK brought out its manifesto in 1956, there was no mention about "dravidanadu", but, demanded only decentralization of powers to the states. On 22-11-1958, he clarified this in "Dravidananu", in his own rhetoric style. That Communists stood second to Congress in the first general elections proved that they joined the democratic polity with commitment to voted citizens of India. On the other hand, the Dravidian ideologists had not come out of the separatist tendencies to join the mainstream on the one or other pretext of claimed exclusiveness from Indians. Their slow transition from 1952 to 1957 to 1962 proved wavering mindset to join democratic and electoral processes within the Constitutional provisions. The ideological conflicts expressed and recorded by the involved parties could be noted from their respective publications (Communist[29] Dravidian[30] and another[31]).

Towards Economic progress and Development

The Dravidian ideologists had begun to understand that the demand of separate state had dragged to a disadvantageous position. As the Communists could dominate politics through electoral democracy, the landlords and industrialists were afraid of them, as their strength was from the farmers and workers. It is well-known that that the Tamil Nadu Congress and DK-DMK parties were dominated by the landlords and businessmen. As the dominant industrialists had been Brahmans, the Dravidian parties adapted and adopted double roles of supporting them inside and opposing outside. The anti-Hindi, anti-north stances of the Dravidian parties made the investors to think twice to take decisions, in spite of the 1956 and 1961 Five year plans. It is evident that the industrialists preferred Karnataka and Andhra rather than the Dravidian Tamil Nadu and the Communist Kerala. In fact, the Keralites preferred Tamil Nadu than their own Kerala. This created in internal debate about the Communist alliance with DMK. Thus, they diverted to other issues like price-rise and so on. Then, considering the reality of funds coming from the landlords and industrialists, they started flexible and reconciliatory approach. In other words, both had started diluting their ideologists for political ambition and power gains. The Kerala rubber manufacturers had been careful in establishing industries in Tamil Nadu. For example, MRF was manufacturing only balloons in 1946, rubber toys in 1949, tread rubber in 1952-56 and tyres only in 1961. As the Tamil Nadu politics was not favourable to Premier Tyres Limited, they established their factory at Kalamassery, Kerala in 1959. Perhaps, Ashok Motors was the only Company started in Madras in 1948 and continued. Nehru inaugurated the Neyveli Lignite Corporation in 1957 and the Salem Steel plant started in 1959 (initial efforts). While the Congress was having good relationship with the TVS group, DMK were having relations with the Amalgamation group. In other words, the "Dravidians" were having relations with the "Aryans."

Periyar's contempt of court case filed against Nehru, the PM of India (1957)[32]

As a PM of India, Nehru had come to Tamil Nadu several times. In 1951, he came to attend the Centenary Celebrations of the Madras Government Museum held at Madras. He came to ICF on October 2, 1955. In 1957 also, he came to visit Trichy. However, when he came in 1958, the DK-DMK showed black flags to him. In 1957, when he went to Trichy with Kamaraj, he visited the house of M. K. Thyagaraja Bhagavathar. At that time, Nehru invited him to join Congress, but, he refused. "The Hindu" dated 10- 12-1957, and in paragraph 5 of the affidavit, he has set out the following extracts of

the speech which he claims as objectionable: "But one of the most remarkable and one of the most foolish agitations that I have experienced in India has recently started in your own State of Madras. This I believe is known as Dravida Kazhagam agitation and the leader of this movement had said something which cannot be forgiven and which cannot be tolerated, Apart from actually talking in an unabashed manner about murder, inviting people to murder others - a thing unheard of in any civilised society he has dared to insult the National Flag and the National Constitution, These are unforgivable offences (cheers).... But, Mr. Nehru said, "I wondered recently, if the Dravida Kazhagam in Madras is not more primitive than any primitive tribe in India (loud cheers)." Already, there was case booked against EVR at that time. So taking this opportunity, he filed a "contempt of court" petition against Nehru. However, his petition was rejected in 1958. Evidently, EVR and his legal group were following the Communist path of litigation with little success.

The inconsistency of the DK-DMK

When Jagajivanram visited Tamil Nadu, they showed black-flags to him in Salem on July 15, 1951, in Coimbatore on July 17 and in Madurai on July 19 1951. Without understanding the significance of first amendment to the Indian Constitution by inserting Article 15(4) that enabled the Governments to provide reservation in education for BC, SC and Minorities, by the term "socially and educationally", he opposed Nehru and Ambedkar. However, when he visited Burma in 1956, he met Ambedkar to discuss about conversion to Buddhism. They opposed Rajaji, but had alliance with him under the banners of Congress Reform Committee (CRS) in 1957 and Swatantra Party formed on June. 4, 1959. In 1957, CRS joined with All India Forward Bloc (AIFB) and contested elections opposing Congress winning 17 seats (CRC - 14 and AIFB - 3). DMK could win only 2 seats.

1. Even though, the Dravidian parties opposed Congress, they could not face Kamaraj, the non-Brahman Congress leader till 1967.
2. EVR could not have any alliance with Ambedkar on any basis to come together politically. In fact, Ambedkar became Central Minister, when EVR was slowly sidelined by the upcoming leaders.
3. In 1951, the DK-DMK cadres had shown the black flags to Jagajivanram expose their "social equality" sloganeering etc.
4. Similarly, EVR"'s opposition to "Socially and Educationally Backwards classes" of Article 15(4), proved his blind opposition to Congress, but, actually opposing Ambedkar. Ironically, Syama Prasad Mookerjee also opposed it!
5. In fact, the First Constitutional amendment deals with freedom of speech, freedom of trade, upholding land reforms, equality, but, the Dravidian ideologists could not appreciate them judiciously[33].
6. It is also unimaginable that the DK-DMK ideologists opposed Ambedkar and Jagajivanram.
7. As already pointed out, the Communists had been quick enough to shed their violence of armed struggle and follow the democratic polity immediately. Thus, they fought the 1952 and 1957 elections effectively registering their presence at the centre and state levels.
8. However, the Dravidian groups, mainly DK and DMK had been inconsistent, indecisive and separatist about the Democratic polity, electoral politics and economic progress joining the national processes.
9. While the communists become the second largest party at national level and the main opposition party at state level, the Dravidian ideologists turned politicians had been experimenting with politics. In 1952, they were not recognized by the Election Commission and politicians and in 1957, they could win only two seats.
10. The DK under Periyar had been carrying out the anti-national activities, defying the law of the land and prosecuted for the violations with penalties and imprisonment.

Notes & References

1. M. P. Sivagnanam during a literary festival held at Trichy rock fort on June.26, 1945 expressed his view about "State's self-rule" [Manila suyatchi], the Federal ruling power in independent India. The DK and DMK were also pursuing such ideology, but, to the extent of opposing independence. Nehruvian government enacted the Constitutional (Sixteenth) Amendment Act 1963 to curb the anti-national and separatist forces and protect the sovereignty and integrity of India.
2. Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev was a politician who led the Soviet Union during part of the Cold War
3. Nikolai Alexandrovich Bulganin was a Soviet politician who served as Minister of Defense and Premier of the Soviet Union under Nikita Khrushchev, following service in the Red Army and as defense minister under Joseph Stalin.
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13. *Viduthalai* editorial dated 15-02-1950
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16 B.R. Ambedkar, *BAWS Vol-17 Part-I*, p.406.
17. *Viduthalai*, 27 November,1951, p.1.
18. Selig S. Harrison, *India: The Most Dangerous Decades*, Princeton Legacy Library, USA, 1960.
19. Kunrathol, *Jeevavukku Bathil (Answer to Jeeva)*, Madras, 1954, pp.25, 31-32.
20. Kunrathol, *Jeevavukku Bathil (Answer to Jeeva)*, Madras, 1954, pp.25, 36-37.
21. "The Communists have their office at a foreign place, Bombay or Delhi," said Periyar, 'and they are just as interested in exploiting our country as any of the foreign-controlled parties. Besides, most of the Communist leaders are Brahmans. Ramamurti is a pucca (grade A) Brahman. The editors of *Janasakti*" (Tamil Communist weekly) are Brahmans. Wherever a Brahman goes, into the Communist Party or anywhere else, he wants to support caste distinctions." Selig S. Harrison, *op.cit.* p.186.
22. *Free Press Journal*, Bombay, 11 February,1952, p.1.
23. R. Kannan, *Anna: The Life and Times of C.N. Annadurai*, Penguin / Viking, New Delhi, 2010, p.192.
24. Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr. (1964-1965). "The DMK and the Politics of Tamil Nationalism", *Pacific Affairs*, 37 (4): 396-411.
25. R. Manivannan, "1991 Tamil Nadu Elections: Issues, Strategies and Performance", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 27 (4), 25 January, 1992: 164-170.
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